

The Voice of the Subject:

Migrant Women's Labor During the Pandemic Period



KIRKAYAK
K Ü L T Ü R



**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**



The Voice of the Subject:

Migrant Women's Labor During the Pandemic Period



Report Prepared By

Canan Uçar

Damla Deniz Cengiz

Emine Dođan Kaya

Fatma Cořkun Caymaz

Kemal Vural Tarlan

Photographs

Kemal Vural Tarlan

Damla Deniz Cengiz

Design

Salah Al Khal

Project Coordinator

Damla Deniz Cengiz

Kırkayak Kùltür

1st Print, Gaziantep, December 2020

KIRKAYAK KùLTÜR

Kırkayak Kùltür - Sanat Merkezi

Akyol Mah. Atatürk Bulvarı. Şaban Sok. No:36/1

P.K 27010 Şahinbey/Gaziantep

Tel: 0342 230 74 54

kirkayaksanat@gmail.com

info@kirkayak.org

KIRKAYAK KùLTÜR - CENTRE OF MIGRATION AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Bey Mah. Atatürk Bulvarı Uyum Apt. No:30 Kat:1 Şahinbey/Gaziantep

Tel: 0342 220 20 80

gocmerkezi@kirkayak.org



KirkayakKultur

Kırkayak Kùltür

www.kirkayak.org

Middle East Gypsies

www.middleeastgypsies.com

This publication is public property. There is no need to seek permission from Kırkayak Kùltür in order to make citations to or reproduce part or whole of the publication. Citations may be made from it and it may be distributed commonly with the condition due reference is shown.

This report was prepared with support from European Union Sivil Dusun Program and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association . The content of this report remains fully under the responsibility of Kırkayak Kùltür. The expressions contained in the report are the opinions of Kırkayak Kùltür itself, and do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of European Union Sivil Dusun Program and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association .

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	GENERAL FRAMEWORK	7
1.1.1	Syrian migrant women's labor in Turkey	7
1.1.2	Women's labor in Gaziantep	8
1.1.3	Covid-19 process	9
1.2	REASONS TO CONDUCT THE STUDY	10
1.3	BEFORE AND DURING THE STUDY SITE PROCESS	13
2.	THE STORIES OF THE WOMEN	16
2.1	After the Site	30
3.	CONCLUSION	33
3.1	THE PANDEMIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY	36
3.2	What the post-pandemic situation and future promises	37
4.	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	38
5.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	42

1. INTRODUCTION



The current immigration perception is largely based on male migrants. In the same manner, the debates on labor are also escalated on male labor. Along with this general perception accepted in society, the migrant women, who themselves are the subject, also tend to have this point of view. Especially women from lower economic groups may define their position as supporting men, while not considering their labor in working life. The women from the middle and upper-middle economic class are observed to practice their professions informally or work in different professions in the countries where they are resettled. The uncertainty about their future causes insecurity in both groups. Unfortunately, the academic debates and reports of civil society or public institutions may also consolidate this perception. On the other hand, as women get involved in the public domain, they can also contact beyond their communities and do add a practice of solidarity to previous introverted survival strategies. With COVID-19, which has affected the whole world since March 2020 and has shifted all economic and social balances, the problems of migrant women have deepened and the need for solidarity has increased.

As Kırkayak Kültür, we wanted to present a response to this need that we see around us. Accordingly, we set off with the idea of recognizing migrant women, whose existence and labor have already been ignored, and increasing the visibility of their presence in the public domain. It is aimed to clear the way for them to materialize their realities against being referred to by their identities, which are frequently associated with the victim or crime, in the media and mainstreaming discourse.

In the video project title *The voice of the Subject: Migrant Women's Labor during the Pandemic Period*, we have carried out exercises by focusing on them within solidarity. Against all the ways where their identities and labor are rendered invisible, we have generated a solidarity practice by bearing their word into the public domain. In this context, a total of ten women, from diverse ethnic groups, living in Gaziantep in different neighborhoods and working in different sectors were interviewed. While precarity and uncertainties regarding their future are the main common problems shared by women in these interviews, there are also problems specific to their profession or economic situation. However, it is clear in both the report and the videos that women cope with difficulties and refuse the image of weak migrant women, expressed in the general discourse.

As an organization in the field since 2011, we have always observed the following in our field experiences: The process of migration and the aftermaths change many social rules and statuses from the daily life of

societies to their traditional codes or cause a break in these traditional codes. Syrian women who sought asylum in Turkey have been one of the social groups in society who suffered most during the civil war and conflicts from which they came. There are news, narratives, and reports stating that women and children suffered most during this civil war and that gender-based violence was used as a weapon of war. In other respects, when we consider the stories of migrant women for the last 9 years, the social upheaval has made women more visible in daily life, and migrant women go out of their home to work and they have started to work, though informally, in factories, workshops, croplands, streets, domestic works, service sector, non-governmental organizations and in many other jobs. Contrary to popular belief, countless migrant women involved in the their families, are engaged in the production processes every day.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Covid-19 reached a global outbreak level and officially declared an outbreak. The effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on various social groups have been more visible over the past eight months.

Studies show that these social groups are mainly vulnerable segments of the society such as refugees, migrants, displaced population, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities. The reasons why these groups are most at risk can be listed as follows: insufficient access to social services particularly health services, dependence on the informal labor economy, living in areas where outbreak risk is high, limited access to technology, being excluded from decision-making mechanisms and limited opportunities for mutual adaptation.

This study includes the experiences of Syrian migrant women, who mostly work in informal fields, during the outbreak period, and their thoughts about the future.

We would like to thank the European Union Sivil Dusun Program and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association for supporting this study.

1.1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK

1.1.1 Syrian migrant women's labor in Turkey

The Turkish labor market has caused all labor groups that are linked to the market to experience different market conditions due to its historical structure and distinctive dynamics and restrictions. Despite these differences, it will be possible for us to talk about some of the basic dynamics of the market that have become common among all these groups. 34.5% of Turkey's labor market is informal (SSI, 2019). The current structure of informal labor-intensive sectors,



prone to cheap labor and precarious employment, has played a facilitating role in the junction of Syrian migrants with these sectors. In particular, in the informal labor market, the market has both opened, created, transformed areas for women as well as migrant and migrant women for them to be integrated into and also has trivialized and rendered invisible labor of these women through the adopted labor, migration and gender regimes (of which the most prominent features can be expressed as flexibility-precarity, temporality and sexism).

As of 2011, integration processes of the Syrians in Turkey's labor market have been gaining momentum. In some large-scale studies, (AFAD, 2014; HÜNEE, 2019; KADEM, 2018; UN Women, 2018), Syrian migrant women appear to be largely unemployed. Yet the in-depth studies have tried to render migrant women's labor visible in the labor-intensive informal sectors. These studies tried to make the labor of migrant women visible in agricultural production (Dedeoğlu & Sefa Bayraktar, 2018), textile industry (Ünlütürk Ulutaş & Akbaş, 2018), domestic piecework (Uçar, 2020), in various labor-intensive works in both domestic works and outside the home (Körükmez & Karakılık & Daniş, 2020) and to include the experiences of women, forms of struggle and tactics they have developed, going beyond the perception of the inured "victim" concept. While women may have experience of deescalating professionally in various sectors as their education level, working experience, and skills they had before being displaced (Sert, 2016) have not been recognized, such qualifications may provide an advantage for them to work in national

and international NGOs and various organizations. When we think of Syrian migrant women's labor in general, the most important concepts are precarity and disorder, regardless of the sector, field, legal status (even if it is an experience that can vary with age, education, ethnicity, class differences). Although the conditions of those working in NGOs are better, the fact that project-based jobs are temporary leads to just another uncertainty again (Körükmez et al., 2020, p. 51).

The challenging conditions for working and daily life of the Syrian women can be lined as long working hours, overwork, unhealthy physical conditions, low wages, and further stratification of all these conditions along with ethnic and sexist discrimination and social exclusion, bearing almost alone the responsibility for child-elderly-disabled care and domestic reproduction processes.

1.1.2 Women's labor in Gaziantep

Gaziantep has been one of the most important industrial and commercial centers of Turkey and particularly of the region. It witnessed various labor and forced migration processes both as part of urbanization as well as the nationalization history of Turkey. (Geniş, 2011, p. 365–367). The last mass migration movement in Gaziantep society was the forced migration of Syrians, which started with the Syrian civil war in 2011. Started in the 1990s and has been expanding until today, Gaziantep's industrial development process is regarded as a success story. However, as the economy of Gaziantep is mainly based on the production of intermediate goods, it has been growing powered by cheap labor (Gündüz Hoşgör, 2011, p. 491). In parallel to the growth process of Turkey's informal economy, informality has increased in Gaziantep and facilitate the integration of disadvantaged groups into this industry.

When these processes are evaluated from the viewpoint of women; as of the 1980s, while a small number of educated women were employed in the formal economy, the ratio of women employed in the informal economy was higher than that of men. In other words, women have been marginalized along with the economic development process. The participation of uneducated or less educated lower-class women in the formal economy was limited and these women started to work in domestic piecework such as pistachio cracking, knitting, embroidery, lace as well as housework and baby-sitting (Gültekin and Leyla Kuzu, 2011, p. 522; Gündüz Hoşgör, 2011, s. 502). In short, they have been integrated into the home-based informal labor market as cheap labor in an insecure way. In this context, the integration of the Syrian women into the informal labor market currently operating in Gaziantep (the

situation differs and requires deep analysis, of course, given the diversity of the Syrian women groups and the cultural, social, and class dynamics they bring) has become relatively facilitated. The places and conditions of the Syrian migrant women in the labor market are the facts that need to be addressed as a result of labor, migration, and gender regimes in Turkey. In Gaziantep, the migrant women work in generally labor-intensive sectors and places such as the textile, service sector, sweatshops, and in what we can call piecework at home. Also, some women perform their profession at home or in a workplace of her colleague with Turkish nationality in Turkey informally (doctor, dentist, hairdresser) and also there are some Syrian women from a different class, age, and ethnicity who start their enterprise and work in NGOs and various organizations and institutions.

1.1.3 Covid-19 process

In every sense, while the Covid-19 pandemic period, which affects us all, is still ongoing; this process affected and has been affecting different groups in different ways and at different extents. It is an indisputable fact that it considerably has an impact on the labor market. However, because the extent provided to the researchers on the current conditions is too narrow, we currently have a limited number of studies and reports on the labor market of the Syrian migrants. An important issue pointed out by the studies carried out is unemployment, which has increased significantly among the Syrian migrants (IFRC and Turkish Red Crescent Society, 2020; SGDD-ASAM, 2020; Zirh et al., 2020). Besides, the health, education, housing problems, and financial difficulties that migrants had already experienced before Covid-19, have deepened and become more apparent.

Dedeoğlu's (2020) study, *The Fragile Heroes: The Migrant Women's Labor in Agricultural Production during the Covid-19 Pandemic Period*, which was conducted on the migrant women's labor during the Covid-19 pandemic, provides us with a general assessment of how the migrant women's labor can be affected. It is emphasized that this process reveals the problems that exist. The severity of the situation is also increasing as the seasonal women workers and girls, who currently benefit from health, education, and many social services with little or no use, have the right to access health services only in the provinces where they are registered (Dedeoğlu, 2020). In this difficult process, we have a limited number of studies due to the very serious constraints faced in the research field. To reveal the dynamics of the process and to understand the change and transformation in this process, any research to be conducted with available resources will be quite valuable.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that this study is conducted both to emphasize solidarity and to render the groups and layers -which always remained invisible- heard and more visible at the least.

1.2 REASONS TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

Covid-19 has affected the whole world since the second quarter of 2020. However, the pandemic did not take its effects just on physical health. The disease affected people psychologically, culturally, and economically, and in many different aspects (UN, 2020a, p. 2). Due to the measures, people locked themselves down in the house, the consumption other than essential needs was restricted, the activities requiring physical involvement were canceled, distance education was adopted, and the cafes and restaurants were closed for a while. Therefore, the impact of the disease on the individuals revealed itself not only through the fear it created but also through the secondary factors. Apart from the psychological dimensions it has caused, the disease also exposed itself to the economic dimension. Businesses that were temporarily closed due to the measures faced serious economic crises due to lack of support, and thus the employees were made redundant. Even in businesses that were not closed, there were unpaid leaves or redundancies due to the sudden drops in sales rates. The insecure working groups were most intensely affected by this situation (Üstübici and Karadağ, 2020, p. 6).



On the other hand, as a result of the lockdown for security reasons, the margin between public and private domain has also become indistinct. The home has become a workplace for people who can continue their business over the internet, and for those who have to go to work, they have adopted the fear of infecting their families at home. In other respects, while many areas where the women could get support were closed due to the pandemic, domestic violence increased (Foley & Piper, 2020, p. 7). In places where breathing is difficult and in closed areas where physical distance is not maintained all day, the use of masks poses new challenges for people who

have to work at an intensive tempo and for long hours.

Undoubtedly, those with the socially disadvantaged position are most affected by the negative conditions of this period, where it has been restricted to come together, or even if it is possible, the physical distance is maintained along with the low communication level at workplaces, cultural events and on streets. The groups having difficulty in making their voices heard had to deal with economic and social problems alone, let alone the health problems they faced during the pandemic period. With the withdrawal of many non-governmental organizations, the groups, left alone to face problems on their own, have lost their support. That being the case, life has become even more difficult for migrants, which had been already struggling with precarity, negative working conditions, and uncertainty, leading them to have become more invisible in the public domain.

Undoubtedly, this situation has different dimensions for women. While coping with the same economic difficulties, they faced difficult conditions two times more due to their increasing workload for the reasons such as child care, domestic cleaning, food as a result of the constant presence of family members at home, etc. (UN Women, 2020, pp. 2-3). The remote process of education due to the taken pandemic measures has also laid a burden on women. This situation has increased the workload and pressure on women exponentially. The women have been forced to shoulder the responsibility for the child and elderly in the household, and correspondingly this causes some women to lose their jobs and their labor is rendered invisible.

Reduce in the presence of migrant women, who are defined over their victimization under a single identity in the public domain, has increased the strength of such misrepresentation. Especially in the contents of the media, there are victim identities and news frequently associated with crime (Hrant Dink Foundation, 2020, p. 7). This condition is consolidated with the mainstream discourse and the campaigns of humanitarian organizations. Accordingly, even the discourses put forward with good intentions show a reductive effect for many groups containing cultural, ethnic, and class identities. However, today, women are working in different sectors in Turkey, included in different economic groups, having different cultural and ethnic characteristics.

Since the establishment in 2011, Kırkayak Kültür has aimed to offer a space for different groups to congregate. Accordingly, it conducts studies with the focal point of transculturalism, translated as coexistence. The study of "The Migrant Women's Labor the Pandemic Period", which is shaped with the focus of coexistence, was created by considering the above-mentioned

problems. We have interviewed ten women from different sectors and different ethnic groups. These ten women were chosen with a focus on keeping the sample as extended as possible. The study, shaped around the changes they experienced during the pandemic period and the solutions they produced, presented much more than expected with the contributions of the interviewees. It has been achieved to provide a broader perspective on the conditions of the migrant women in Turkey and their participation in the labor process. With this study, while making the labor of the migrant women visible, also an alternative, counter-reality was created regarding the provided limited representations. In the domain created with the video, it is aimed to create a space where women from different sectors who are involved in labor processes can express themselves. In this field, they had the opportunity to transfer their realities and the solutions they created for such problems and the changes they experienced during the pandemic period. Some of the women interviewed were among those with whom we had been in contact before and developed different practices of togetherness. The study was realized with the information we gathered thanks to the continuity of our relations with these women also during the pandemic period. In addition to the women from the groups with which we are currently in solidarity, we also interviewed women who were contacted for work. As Kırkayak Kültür, we establish permanent relationships with the people we communicate with by going beyond the institution-beneficiary relationship. Accordingly, despite the difficulties experienced during the pandemic period, we decided to continue our work and provide an area for the survival strategies developed by them in line with our competencies. From this point of view, we saw the importance of increasing the visibility of our neighbor women's labor and advocating for their demands.

The most important emphasis in the design of this video series was the inclusion of the women's voices to ensure their existence and visibility with their own words. As it was revealed once again in the interviews, the migrant women are neither victims nor miserable. They are the women who can deal with problems and have their demands and willpower. For this reason, as Kırkayak Kültür, we paid regard to the importance of reintegrating these women into the public domain, pushed out of cultural spheres. We wanted to provide a space for women's invisible identities and their labor, whose burden and invisibility increased with the pandemic. We have featured these women in our videos, not as needful victims, but as women who want to announce their demands.

Although the physical distance stipulated in line with pandemic measures, prevents the feeling of coming together and togetherness, we continue to

establish partnerships from different places and hear each other's voices. Although the pandemic prevents gathering in the physical public spaces and on the street, it also clears the way for gathering by overcoming spatial boundaries over the internet thanks to online public domains. By this means, everything about the migrant women's labor can be heard with their voices, not through what is spoken about.

1.3 BEFORE AND DURING THE STUDY SITE PROCESS

Before the study, we performed preliminary research regarding which women we can shoot. We have identified both the women we know from our previous activities and the women with whom we would shoot videos with the guidance of the people who mediated us on the site. The fact that we had performed, and are still performing, life-based activities in the past and that we are in contact with many women have had a facilitating effect in reaching women and their participation in the study. Apart from the selected persons, we went to a restaurant which we know is run by a Syrian woman and explained ourselves and the study we wanted to conduct. We held our meeting at a convenient time to shoot upon his request to appear in the videos.



It was ensured that the shootings were made paying attention to the fact that the women are from different business lines. Thus, we wanted to show the differences in working conditions of women across sectors and how they were affected during the pandemic. Some of the women do piecework at home, some run their restaurant, some go to collect scrap, some work as a doctor, some work as agricultural workers, textile workers, teachers, non-governmental organization workers.

One of the shootings was in Nizip, one in Islahiye, and the other in Gaziantep city center. We shot the videos with the woman who run a restaurant and and women who work at non-governmental organizations in their workplaces,

while with the other women at their homes. Before the interviews were held, it was stated that the women would be filmed in accordance with the measures taken due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the shooting, the necessary measures were taken, and the shooting equipment and the shooting person took the place in compliance with the distance rules. Interviews were made with the presence of the person who would film, the person asking the questions, and the translator when required. A certain time limit was brought for interviews with the women whom we had to meet at their homes, and long shots that might put each other in danger were prevented. The reasons for us to carry out shooting at home are that the women have been unemployed after the pandemic, or they continue their work from home or that they do piecework at home.

We can say that shooting at the women's homes is also more efficient for us in terms of the study we conduct. The home environment, in which we could also be involved in the daily lives of the women, gave us information about their lifestyles. We witnessed how a part of the homes of the women, who started working from home with the pandemic, was converted into a working environment. Also, we interviewed people among whom was an agricultural worker, and the other collected scrap at the tent area where the families from the Refugee Abdal Community coming from Syria live, in their home tents. The interviews were held in an environment where people living in other tents in the neighborhood watched in accordance with the physical distance. Although this situation caused trouble from time to time (noise, others responding to the questions asked, children, playing around...), the videos of the study were taken without any problems at the end of the day. The homes of the families living in tents appeared as places where private and public domains were physically intertwined with each other, and where troubles and joys were shared with other families around.

The points such as the size of the houses visited, their belongings, with whom the houses became living space, and which neighborhood they were in showed us the class differences among the women. Along with these differences, we have seen that they have common issues such as precarious work, feeling insecure, longing for their own country, inability to do their profession.

All of the women we interviewed were Syrian. Therefore, we received Arabic and Kurdish translation support in some interviews. We were able to meet with the Turkish-speaking or Turkmen women without translation support.

Even though our interview requests received a positive response, we had to explain from time to time that we were not an aid organization for the women we interviewed and that we did not request an interview to provide any financial aid. By explaining the purpose of the study, we eliminated these demands. However, with the withdrawal of many non-governmental organizations and local governments from the site during the pandemic period, we saw that the interrupted aid caused a difficult situation for the families.

It made us feel helpless having witnessed the troubles of the women we met who are going through financially difficult times, sharing their hopeless moments from time to time, however not being able to do anything for the problems that need to be solved. Yet, the importance of our study was highlighted at this point. Solidarity with the women, creating a space to make their voices heard perhaps will guide the institutions or individuals who will get involved in the solution for their exercises in terms of providing solutions.

When you watch the video series we made, you will see that we only shot the hands of women. When we started to work, we did not think in this way; we set out to shoot the women, who do not want to show their faces, from an angle they would like along with the shots where the faces of women are visible. However, with these shots, the women taught us the fears of being a migrant woman as well as being a woman. In fact, the ID of one of the women, who had entered Turkey, was dispossessed after she returned to Syria and she was trying to hold on to life for many years in Gaziantep. Another woman did not want to have troubles that might arise in case her brothers and locals watched the video. Yet another one was afraid that the appearance of her face might affect the aid she would receive or that she could have trouble where she works. Under these circumstances, we decided to shoot only their hands in a way that they would not be stressed in any way and feel more comfortable. Thus, the shootings also created their aesthetics. Due to the uneasiness and also to prevent any probable trouble, the real names of the women were changed respecting the confidentiality decision of the women. The women, who allowed the use of their real names, are also included in the report with their real names. When you watch the videos, you will see how they express their sadness, excitement, and anger with their hands.

2. THE STORIES OF THE WOMEN



FATMA

Having migrated from Aleppo in Syria, Fatma is married and has been living in Gaziantep with her three children for about 7 years but her husband is in Syria and with her family, she lives as tenants in a house with a small courtyard in the Akyol neighborhood.

When she first came from Syria, she looked for a job and did cleaning works, but after she felt uncomfortable with the cleaning work, she has started to make uppers. She has been making shoes at home for 5 years. Stating that she got this job through an Arab client, Fatma adds that she has to work on it even till the late hours because their financial situation is bad though it is very difficult. She has been spending time making shoes and doing cleaning works after getting up in the morning and preparing the kids' breakfast until lunch, from the lunch until the cleaning of the house, from the cleaning until dinner, from dinner until the night.



She says that although she spends all day doing her work except sleep, working at home is more suitable for her because she has a small child and health problems.

Fatma, who had not left the house for three days with her children after the pandemic was declared, went out at the end of the third day when her family ran short of food. She says that she does not let her children out, even when something is needed, they leave and come back home promptly without delay. Since she could not get any works from the mediator, they can now make a living on the help they receive from the Red Crescent.

"I want to work constantly. We want to work and get a stable salary. Those [aids] could be sufficient for a month or two for us, namely, temporary. Whatever comes from others cannot be permanent".

ZEHRA

When we went to meet Zehra, she had a two-year-old son and a daughter who was born just three days ago. Zehra, who was just a child when she came to Turkey in 2011, emigrated with his family leaving her school because of the war. After living in Turkey for 4 years, she returned to Syria to get married. Having married and stayed in Syria for 1 year, she returned to Turkey and settled in Gaziantep where she had first been. Because Zehra, who lives with her two children and husband in a small house on the ground floor in the Akyol neighborhood, went to Syria and headed back, her identity card was taken from her and she has been living in Gaziantep for years without an identity card.



"We have not been able to pay our rent for four months, nor electricity and water bills for a long period. Also, since I do not have an identity card, I had a cesarean delivery thanks to the money we borrowed from someone. We could not have paid our debt yet."

After doing cleaning works in the shoe factory when she returned to Syria, she began to make shoes and slippers at home in Turkey. While doing this job at home for four years, the pandemic period has negatively affected her like everyone else. Given that her husband is also unemployed, there are urgent needs, especially for a woman who has just given birth to a baby. Since they do not have an identity card, they cannot benefit from public institutions, and this situation directs them to private hospitals for all healthcare services they need.

"No work is just a piece of cake, sister, life is difficult."

Since she does the paid job at home, she starts working just after she gets up in the morning continues until she goes to bed. While trying to keep up with the household chores, she also tries to finish the shoe job. Decorating the slipper uppers and shoes with beads, Zehra uses a hammer for such work.

Zehra, whose dream is to obtain her identity and overcome the material and spiritual difficulties of being without an identity, expects the people and

institutions that will solve this situation to take action for the future of her family as soon as possible.

MUNA

Muna, who lived with her husband, daughter, and cat, had to emigrate from Damascus, Syria. Having arrived at Gaziantep and stayed for 4-5 months, they moved to Istanbul and lived there for about 1 year. After giving birth in Istanbul, she and her family came back to Gaziantep.

Muna, who worked as a secretary in some non-governmental organizations after coming to Turkey, stated that she was not comfortable with this job and therefore quit. She left her 8-month-old baby in the care of a babysitter and started working as an English teacher at that time. The school she worked for had difficulties getting her work permit to hire as a teacher, yet then managed to obtain as disguising her as a secretary.



"I studied artificial limbs in Damascus and worked in this field. I could not work in this field when I came to Turkey due to the language barrier. And then as a secretary in an association, I couldn't like the job, it was just not for me. Then I started teaching and ended up here among the children."

Muna, who had trouble learning Turkish, and communicating with colleagues and children when he started working, but she stated that his colleagues at the school did their best to make sure that she would not feel out of place.

With the declaration of the pandemic, she expressed that the school had difficulty in paying teacher salaries and received support from the state, and also, they experienced a decrease in their salaries in this period. Muna stated that providing distance education reduced the efficiency of lessons truly a lot, and the process for the preparation was also hard. She said that she even sewed costumes at home to draw the attention of the kids. In fact, it was very difficult to teach something new through distance education, so she made a great effort to ensure that children would remember what they had learned before the pandemic.

“The system at home had been neglected during this period, it was always a mess. I feel that I can’t do anything efficient even though I’ve put a lot of effort into the lessons. I work five hours a day, but I am tired a lot more than I was in my old work system.”

NUR

Nur, who came from Syria, has been living in Gaziantep with his spouse for two years. She came to Turkey about eight years ago and within this period, she boarded with her various relatives in Turkey in line with job opportunities and lived in Kilis, Istanbul, Gaziantep provinces. Nur, who came to her sister, has faced economic difficulties in the early stages of her arrival in Turkey and worked in different jobs at intervals from her childhood. She got married two or three years after her arrival. Continued her education while she was in Aleppo, Nur first escaped to different areas within Syria and after the war started, and then emigrated to Turkey with his family.



While in Kilis, Nur was engaged in gardening and worked in the textile industry in Istanbul and waste collection and once again in the textile industry in Gaziantep. Performing errand works in the textile industry), Nur is responsible for the cleaning, folding, and packaging processes of the shirts. Nur, who started the textile work during the pandemic period, does not consider the occasional waste collection she was involved in before the pandemic as an “occupation”. She defines the job she is currently working for as “earning pocket money for the home.” She states that she started working to support her spouse, whose business was stagnant due to the pandemic. The family underwent very severe economic challenges, and yet they were able to cope with everything thanks to the support from the circle of friends around, during this period.

“I don’t know how to say. We were hungry sometimes, and got help from my mother-in-law.”

During the pandemic, to pay the rent was the most challenging problem for the family, so the couple collected waste on the days when there was no

lockdown. Nur, who had to go to work with his spouse during this period when the scrap-waste collection was forbidden, had to work early in the morning and on the boundaries of the city. Due to the lack of waste in these regions, they had to work more than twelve hours to collect the required quantity.

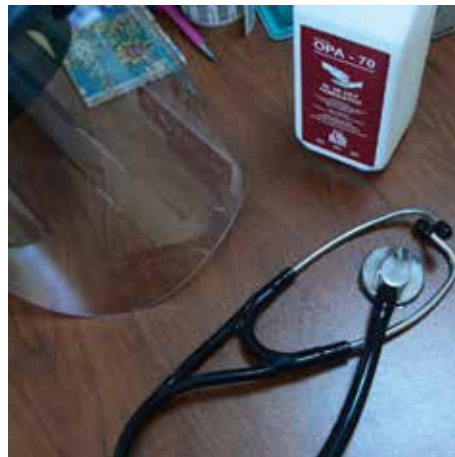
• *“Well, if this disease proceeds like this, I will have to work for the rest of my life.”*

Although her discomfort increases when she sits too much due to a herniated disc, she has to work twelve hours a day with a single break. Nur, who works between seven in the morning and seven in the evening, says that they take a break at around noon and are sometimes served tea in the afternoon, yet they do not take any further breaks afterward. She stated that a total of fifteen people worked in the workshop, three of whom are women. In addition to difficulties such as bad and intensive working conditions at her workplace, she also has to deal with the economic troubles due to the too low salaries to live on. But she still prefers her current job to scrap waste collection.

• *They'd better help and get us a good job, actually. Now the job I work for... The girls who work with me are paid 300 TL a week. Well, and I get 450 TL. I just don't have a single idea about what to do with such a little amount of money. Should I cook dinner, cover the bills, pay the rent with it?*

HALA

Hala, who has been in Turkey for 7 years, emigrated to Gaziantep from Aleppo. Hala, who lives with her mother, says she is engaged now and has plans to get married and settle in England soon. Hala studied medicine in Iran and is specialized in gynecological diseases. She speaks four languages and has been working for 10 years. Hala, who works as a family doctor at a migrant health center in Gaziantep, has previously worked for a while in a hospital in Istanbul, mobile clinics, and Jarabulus Hospital in Syria. Though she considers the working conditions in Istanbul is better than in Gaziantep,



she also thinks that the times she worked in Jarabulus were even much better. She said that people in Istanbul do not care much whether she is from Syria or not, but that the situation is different in Gaziantep.

• *“My best work period was in Syria (Jarabulus) because there is nothing better than being a doctor in one’s own country.”*

She does not feel content due to not being able to work in her area of expertise at the migrant health center and adds that the working conditions here come with great difficulty. Noting that she examines about 100 patients a day, she complains about not being able to spend enough time on patients and sometimes she feels like she’s just there to prescribe medication. Even if she finishes up equivalency and citizenship procedures, she thinks that she will have difficulties communicating with patients because she does not speak Turkish well and that she may draw a reaction from Turkish patients, perhaps due to being a Syrian.

Marking that there have been no major changes in her life with the pandemic, Hala asserts that the Syrians already have travel restrictions, and can’t get travel around as they like. She stated that the pandemic affected her life psychologically.

She often reads and studies outside of working hours, and if she has some time left, she spends it with his mother and nephews. Stating that her life is jammed between work and studying, Hala believes that she will create the change herself.

• *I no longer expect help from anywhere to create change, not from the state nor international health organizations. I’m going to create the change by myself. My dream is about returning to my own country, get her back on the feet, and help the people out, strengthen the health sector there. To accomplish there what I learned here.*

With a will to live in a place where she would be esteemed professionally, Hala wants to get married and settle in England. Demand to set off for immigration again; but this time, to be esteemed and perform her profession as she wishes.

SORIN

Sorin, who emigrated from Jarabulus, Syria, is married with 5 children. She has been in Nizip for 7 years with her family and the other Abdal families in the tent area they settled. Sorin, who was living on by collecting scrap, used to earn a livelihood by carrying out fieldwork in Syria before she emigrated. She told us, again and again, of having had a hard time in the migration process and the days when they could not even find bread.



There's no water or toilets where they live. Thanks to their neighbors, they learned where to go to work and to find and bring water. They try to meet their needs such as cleaning, food, bathroom, laundry with the water they carry. It is quite difficult to keep sanitized via the portaged water, especially these days when hygiene is critically important for protection against the Covid-19 virus.

Sorin, who used to go to the garbage to collect scrap before the declaration of the pandemic, said that they could only go to the garbage around the neighborhood where they lived after the declaration.

We'd go to the garbage; it was a good thing for us. It was where we earned our bread; we'd bring, sell, eat anything found, or brought from there. We'd handle out anyhow. But the Corona sprang up and caused trouble for all of us. They banned the dump because of the Corona. We can't go to the dump. We're going to the neighborhood dump. One bag, two bags, three bags of the disposed we collect. Then, we're selling them, worth 25 million (25 Turkish Lira) and 40 million (40 Turkish Lira). What can we buy with this money? Bread? Sugar? Tea? Food? Anything? We cannot decide which to buy.

It has become substantially severe for the families to live by since they cannot collect the scrap as much as they used to, so the money they earn is reduced considering they had already earned so little previously.

"Let the beneficent aid and save us from this hardship. We cannot go around because of this corona. Let the beneficent aid and help us with the conscience on the heart.

Being aware that these things would not be fully fixed with charity, Sorin thought that at least his children would be fed with the last aids. Sorin, who complained about the cost of living, frequently said that they could not afford to buy things. Even until the pandemic is over, she thought that if they had received aid, they could have overcome this difficult period. She said they couldn't even afford to spend money for a mask, so they took the money they were going to give for a mask to buy bread, and when they went to the bazaar to collect scrap, and the cops chased them because they couldn't wear masks.

When we asked them what they were doing when they got sick, she said they went to private hospitals because they were being discriminated against in public hospitals. Because they are financially in a very difficult situation, when someone gets sick and can't afford treatment, they all collect money and go to the hospital and receive the treat. These days when we are struggling with an infectious disease and considering that private hospitals charge fees for corona treatment, it is unclear what Sorin and her family will do in case of any disease.

Sorin and the families living in the tent area were waiting for the pistachio harvest to make money. And without that job, it's unclear what they are going to do, how they are going to make money and feed themselves. Sorin said that the field owners already employ very few people in Turkey and that they are experiencing difficulty also here comparing their situation while living in Syria.

«We just don't know where to go, and we can do nothing but expect the pistachio job. We'll look forward to having a job in pistachio collecting. We have stone-picking work (cleaning the stones in the field), when we have a pistachio collecting job, the men go for it. Otherwise, we would be really miserable.»

ZALAL

When we asked Zalal, who had lived in Kobani before the war began, how long she has been in Turkey, she asked us when the war began and said, “I have been living in Turkey since then.” Children of Zalal, who fled from the ISIS and soldiers, remained in Syria. One of her sons is with her and they live together.



Zalal, who lives in a tent area with other seasonal farming families next to the agricultural areas in Fevzipaşa Neighborhood, which is located between Nurdağı and Islahiye, was swinging his grandchild in the cradle and to put the baby to sleep. She said that when they lived in Syria, they did not live collectively in this way.

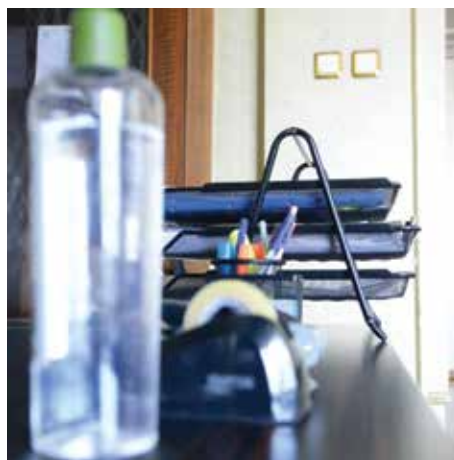
She said that when they were in Syria, they were poor again, had no property, no house, no car. And when they were escaping from the war in Syria, she said that they could only take a few pieces of clothing with them. She thought that if they had not sought asylum in Turkey, they would have been devastated.

Zalal and his family live on daily wages, stating that if it is too cold in winter, they go elsewhere and rent a house and move wherever the houses are cheaper because the rentals are so high.

• *“The disease broke out, that is too bad. We have to work, but now we can’t work. We were supposed to have a rose job, we couldn’t. The outbreak affected us too badly.”*

LUBNA

Lubna, who had to emigrate from Damascus city of Syria 6 years ago, settled in Gaziantep after an initial stay in Kilis for 4 months. Married with a child, Lubna graduated from the journalism department in Syria. She had worked as a graphic designer in Syria for 18 years. She is currently studying the philosophy of nonviolence and human rights at the university.



In 2011, when the Syrian Revolution began, I started working as a human rights and civil activist. My current job is the battle of my country and my citizens. I love this job; I chose to be here. I have a lot of responsibilities, but I'm always pleased. Because despite all we've been through and encountered, we've reached this level and reached out to a lot of women.

Lubna, who is the president of an association working in Syria, stated that the hardest part of their work is to work with people who are constantly threatened by the working environment. She said that this situation creates pressure and that they always have the fear that something will happen to the people they work with. Lubna thinks that it is the price to be paid on working on the battlefield.

We were very affected by the outbreak, and for once we were asked to stop work at the office. The hard part of it was moving home from the office. And with the kids in the house, to handle the job from home was also uneasy. The presence of a child at home who couldn't be sent to kindergarten was a situation that required our extra effort and focus. You always think about what is going to happen to us if we get sick, whether we will get the care we need. We were also concerned about people in Syria because there are not enough health services in the areas where we work. Although there are some, they are not in such a position to combat the outbreak. It's a very tough period.

She stated that with the declaration of the pandemic, the pressure related to her work increased much more and that she could not work on a regular

work basis due to her conduct of administrative affairs. She stated that another reason for flexible employment without pre-determined working hours was the necessity of being in instant contact with the people in Syria because of carrying out Syria-specific activities.

Lubna said that they are subject to difficulties in obtaining a work permit and that this situation has adverse effects on their performance and employment stability. She demanded that all authorities come into play and take the necessary steps to obtain work permits for employees.

SAMIRA

As a surgeon, Samira fled away from Syria in 2011 together with her 4 children and spouse who is also a medical doctor just like her. Having settled in Jordan at first, Samira thereafter came to Turkey with her family in 2015. After a 1-month stay in Kilis, they settled in Gaziantep and have been living in Gaziantep since then.



Samira, who used to work in a hospital and run her private clinic in Syria, expressed that she started working in the field of civil society associated with the beginning of the revolution. They moved the association they founded in Jordan to Turkey by having licensing processes completed, and started to develop projects in Syria. She said that they face challenges, and it is quite difficult for them to obtain work and residence permits. She believes she serves much better people if she finds the opportunity of working as a doctor which is her major profession.

With the outbreak of the corona outbreak, we thought we should work in healthcare services as doctors. We contacted with Gaziantep governorship together with a group of our doctor friends and keep the administration notified that we were ready to work and serve. We wanted to draw the attention of the relevant authorities, we wanted to show that we should take part in healthcare services as medical doctors by profession. Also, we wanted to manifest that we should stand by the medical teams fighting the corona outbreak, and further that Syrian healthcare providers in Turkey should not be kept idle. In Turkey, the general condition of Syrian

healthcare providers is far from being promising. We have done our diligence for long years to achieve a certain specialization. A doctor is only capable of working in the healthcare sector, but nothing else. Also, we wanted to pay our debt to the Turkish people, even if it counts just as a drop in the ocean.

Samira, who voluntarily measures fever of pass-byers at checkpoints located at the entrances and exits of the city, stated that the working conditions were very challenging and that they worked on their feet for long hours in harsh weather conditions. Along with the compelling working conditions, some of the pass-byers had also reacted against their being employed at checkpoints as Syrians. Samira also expressed during the interview that she had faced such situations, too.

"We've also been subject to such a treatment due to the racist attitude of some people."

Samira, who had to do the office work of her association besides her voluntary work during the pandemic process, made her point by saying that moving the office to home was very difficult for her personal life and said that they at least started holding important meetings in the office upon the start of normalization. Closure of schools and having children at homemade things difficult.

Getting prepared for the exam, Samira's dream is to obtain accreditation and hence start working as a doctor again.

LUBNA

Lubna fled to Gaziantep from Aleppo in 2015 with her two daughters because her husband had been under arrest by the Syrian regime at that time. Lubna, who is a graduate of the Faculty of Law at the University of Aleppo, is responsible for running the restaurant as one of the founders of it in addition to legal and personnel management she undertakes in parallel with her professional background. Stating that she had worked with her husband and had a fixed income while in Syria,



Lubna left everything she owned behind and came to Gaziantep just with her clothes.

Lubna, who worked part-time in an association before the outbreak of corona, says she was fired due to the pandemic. As such, she had to dismiss a woman working in a restaurant, and she had to work instead because of financial difficulties. However, since the restaurant was also closed for a month, they had a hard time financially. Stating that her mother also helped her to cook, Lubna did not work for a month due to the fear concerning her mother's old age. However, when her customers started to call frequently, she decided to take action and started to cook from home and serve customers in this way. Lubna, who has never worked from home before, stated that she had a hard time in this process. Since she cooked the meals at home, the materials in the restaurant had to be carried to the home, and this affected the general order at home.

"Upon the beginning of Ramadan, we started a campaign. It was an Iftar campaign, I came to the restaurant and started to cook the meals here and as I could cook 150 portions a day. Then, all the restaurants came back into service, and we opened ours as well."

Stating that she had taken necessary measures after the re-opening of restaurants, Lubna indicated that her Turkish customers didn't come to the restaurant before and after the disease, and they are probably scared. For this purpose, with the help of her Turkish friends, they distributed food for Turkish and Syrian orphans, however, this initiative also did fail.

Stating that his dream is to establish a chain of restaurants, Lubna wants to sell products to big markets, and thus Syrian foods will also be on sale in such markets. She thinks that by this means, she can create a large space where she can promote her food and create job opportunities for almost 20 more women.

"We go home around eleven o'clock in the evening, and perform my evening prayer together with my mother and daughters. Sometimes I don't eat at all, that means I forget myself. Daughters make a dish for me at home to eat."

Lubna, who starts working in the early hours of the morning but could return home at night, spends her days in a very busy agenda to pay the debts accumulated after the closure of the restaurant due to the declaration of a pandemic, and to make a living for her family.

2.1 After the Site

According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration Management, 450.553 people live in Gaziantep under temporary protection status (GIGM, 2020). This is corresponding to 21.77% of the urban population. Gaziantep is one of the cities in Turkey with the highest visibility of the migrants in the public domain. In addition to their involvement in labor processes, they also have a visible economic impact in the city since they own and run shops and enterprises. But when this positive picture is examined a little more closely, the flip side of the coin suddenly becomes visible. Looking deep into the phenomenon, it becomes clear that there are both common problems shared by all the subjects of this community and specific problems that unite them according to their diverse identities.

Undoubtedly, uncertainty about the future and economic insecurity can be cited as the main common problems. Regardless of their economic situation, all women interviewed struggle with uncertainty about their future. The fact that they do not know for how long and under which conditions the “Temporary Protection” they have in Turkey will be valid is the underlying reason for some problems such as living without feeling safe and secure even though a long time has passed after their migration, and hence it isn’t possible to adapt themselves to places they live in. Based on the repatriation attempts that were implemented a short while ago, and the fact that no identity is granted to those coming back to Turkey clears the way for uncertainty experienced by people and for fears arising from this status. The problem of failing to access rights as a result of not being registered poses an obstacle for migrants seeking their basic rights such as health and education by combating discriminatory treatment, to continue their lives healthily. In addition to uncertainty, the inequalities and precarity they have in economic life are among the factors that deepen the inequality. As a result of not being paid an equal wage for equal labor and informality, working without insurance and always working on the edge of being dismissed create problems for migrants linked with participating in the labor process. All these problems trigger a shift in perception if analyzed by adapting a gender-based perspective.

Although nearly half of the migrants who have temporary protection identity in Turkey is composed of women, policies developed for migrant women are far from being adequate. Nevertheless, as revealed in the interviews, women can be involved in labor processes much more widely than in their pre-migration lives, and thus their status in the family economy

may be subject to a change. However, for women who have gained their relative economic power, this situation does not directly lead up to a sort of independence. Women's approach to their labor is generally devalued by characterizing it as a secondary process for "supporting men". As migrants, the discrimination they face has also been multiplied as a result of working in an insecure setting with unequal wages during labor processes. The unequal treatment they encounter as a woman in the workplace also causes them not to see themselves exactly as a subject in the domestic economy. Despite working long hours, women still undertake the responsibility of childcare, cleaning, and cooking which are primarily attributed to them. At this point, we see inequalities created by gender roles. As revealed in the interviews, women still prefer working at home, although they work continuously from the moment they wake up in the morning to sleep at night. Considering the reasons for this situation by looking deep into the issue, the first reason is that they can continue their home and care work concurrently because they are not provided with the domestic division of work. On the other hand, home-based labor also offers a more sheltered alternative in terms of discriminatory attitude, harassment, and maltreatment that they may face in the business life. Nevertheless, another fact that emerges in the field is that the visibility of women's labor can be achieved by the appearance of women in the public sphere. In other words, women can only cope with this devaluation of their labor by discussing their common problems and developing practices of solidarity outside of their communities, and this is only feasible by getting out of the home and coming together with other women and workers. In this sense, the women need to get involved in the public domain in their labor processes in terms of both their visibility and the struggles they can induce.

Another important fact that we encounter in the field is the solidarity practices produced by mass migration. During interviews with the poorest and precarious women, they talked about the obligation to go to a private hospital if they or their children fall sick. The discrimination, which women with such low income are subject to in the state institutions, constitutes an obstacle to their free access to health services, and they try to avoid experiencing discriminatory attitudes by going to private hospitals even they do not have the necessary economic conditions to sustain their daily life. They think that they cannot exercise their rights due to discrimination and cannot see an alternative solution other than going to a private hospital. For this reason, they either go to private hospitals if they can afford, or they become helpless and prefer not going to a hospital, and hence they remain untreated. As a clear indication, an interviewee who accepted us into her

home but did not want to give an interview said that her husband had not been able to go to the hospital for six months despite having progressive lung disease.

We also witnessed in the meetings a practice of solidarity produced at the point of going to a private hospital with families whose economic conditions were not sufficient. As a result of the huge influx of migration, one of the most important issues hereof is related to survival strategies developed by migrants as a practice of solidarity. The example we encounter with all women in Nizip, Ünalı and Akyol is that women support each other when needed, and can overcome by supporting each other the obstacles that prevent them from making a sustainable life for themselves. As you will see in the videos, whatever they have at hand is brought together when the essential need arises. As such, the community looks after not only the future of itself and its household but also the well-being of all members of the community. However, we have also seen that these solidarity practices are negatively affected by external interventions. We have seen that the fact that the incoming aid is only for migrants created conflicts between communities living in the same camp area and supporting each other since the first time they had migrated and harmed the dynamics of the community. As Kirkayak Kültür, we took care not to damage these support mechanisms. We paid attention to establish an equal relationship practice with the people we interviewed. When we went to the site, we took care to create a practice of solidarity against the perception of those expecting aid, resulting from other past experiences.

Aside from the difficulties we encountered in the interviews, the most important factor that stands out is the survival strategies developed by women. In this study, it is primarily and essentially emphasized that these women who are subject to objectification and external decision-making process regarding their lives should have their word regarding their course. Women can turn into subjects by finding the opportunity to convey their conditions, problems, solutions, and demands directly. They are the messengers for Voice of the Subject against the invisibility of migrant women's labor in the public domain.

3. CONCLUSION



For more than 8 months, the daily lives of the people in a great portion of the World have been restricted and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first months of the outbreak, people were unable to go out, workplaces were locked down, and millions of people lost their jobs due to the quarantine implemented in cities and settlements hosting millions of people.

Described as the unprecedented, broadest, and worst global crisis since World War II, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to seriously affect public health, while advancing to cause unprecedented disruptions in the economies and labor markets of all the countries. The outbreak causes socio-economic devastation in the most vulnerable and fragile segments of society.

For the labor market, there is a dramatic loss in employment - a decrease of approximately 10.5 percent in total working hours. The foresight for the future is that the crisis will drive 40-60 million people into extreme poverty in the upcoming period (CCSA, 2020).

Under today's quarantine conditions, even though employers and employees seem to continue to work and the labor markets and economy are likely to resume to be active thanks to the economic and social supports implemented by governments, the course of the second wave of the outbreak causes even a more uncertain panorama for the next period.

With the civil disturbance started in Syria in 2011 and the conflict period evolved into a civil war, millions of Syrians sought asylum in Turkey. During the nine years, some of them crossed to other countries, mainly to Europe, and about 3.6 million Syrian refugees are still in Turkey under temporary protection.

The refugees living in Turkey under temporary protection have been included largely in the informal labor market during this period. According to data released by the Immigration Administration, 2.1 million Syrian refugees at working age (15-65 age range) live in Turkey (GIGM, 2020). According to the statement addressed in December 2019 by the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, the number of the Syrian refugees in Turkey, granted work permit, is around 50 thousand ("Turkey has become a place for finding a job for 113 thousand foreigners", 2019). The said number corresponds to only 4 percent of 1.2 million who are estimated to work actually (Erdoğan and Çorabatır, 2019). According to the 2017 data, the number of working Syrian refugee children between 5-14 in Turkey was determined to be 127.140 (Caro, 2020).

Considering the behavior of Syrian refugees in the labor market during their stay here, it turns out that the employees adapt themselves to the workforce

behaviours in the informal sectors. The main feature of the informal area is its instability. That is characterized by frequent changes in occupation, regular shifts from one job to another, intermittent work, weekly and daily salaries instead of monthly wages, short-term employment and typical unemployment periods, the piece works in small manufacturing workshops operating as subcontracting enterprises, and of course, low wages, long working hours and unsteady income streams are all common features of the informal sectors.

In the period before the pandemic, Syrian refugees used to work informally in low-skilled positions (91.6%) where productivity was relatively low (Caro, 2020). Trade, construction, manufacturing, woodworking, and agriculture are the main informal sectors, and other business areas such as domestic works, portage, and transportation, waste-scrap collection, and animal husbandry - shepherding have the most informality. Textile, clothing, flat knitting, leather, and footwear manufacturing includes the manufacturing sectors where Syrian refugees work most today.

It is known that with the entry of refugee workers into these sectors, wages have fallen further and their working hours have been extended. In studies conducted, refugee women's entry into the labor market is very low in terms of gender (11.2%) (Caro, 2020), and female employees receive lower wages than male employees.

How is life going on at the refugee homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the last 8 months? How did the lives of these people change during the pandemic? How were the effects of the epidemic around here? The studies conducted to find answers to these questions give out extremely striking figures about the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on the refugees. It seems that more than 80 percent of the working refugees before the outbreak either have lost their jobs or have been unable to work. The vast majority of households (76.7%) are trying to survive on borrowing, and their expenditures have increased significantly during the outbreak period (IFRC and Turkish Red Crescent Society, 2020; Tarlan, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The refugees/migrants mostly live in their settlements, side by side with the host community, and almost all of them work in partially informal jobs. In addition to limitations related to their access to the labor market, the adopted legal status, the language and administrative barriers, the access of the refugees to the formal jobs is predicted to become difficult with the COVID-19 outbreak after the legal and regulatory restrictions imposed following the epidemic.

3.1 THE PANDEMIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY

According to even with the limited data obtained due to restrictions during the outbreak period, approximately 5 million migrants and refugees struggle to live under very difficult conditions and to protect themselves against the disease, as given in the unofficial figures. The statistical data on the transmission and effects of the disease on the refugee community is not officially available, but the aforesaid data and site observations and interviews show that the situation tends to get worse day by day.

During the pandemic period, the level of poverty among the households of such people gets gradually deeper. It is observed that the unemployment rate has exceeded 80%, almost all of the refugees have spent their savings, they have borrowed from Syrian grocery stores on their street along with their landlords, and apart from all, they are debtors to the municipality for water and natural gas bills and the electricity provider company for 2-3 months. Many of them can access fundamental foodstuff with aid or through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program. In many interviews, people think that they were “left behind” during the breakdown. The fact that the humanitarian aid is provided only to the Turkish citizens especially by the municipalities and foundations reinforces the “feel of being left behind” among them. Besides, the fact that non-governmental organizations have mostly stayed away from the site for a long time during the outbreak, and that they do not contact the newly vulnerable refugee families consolidates their feelings of helplessness day by day. The refugees will be in dire need of NGOs during the outbreak and in the future.

It is necessary to arrange new and urgent plans to prevent poverty from going deeper for the most vulnerable parts of society. First of all, best practices used for cash transfers, child allowances, and shelter and food aid should be prioritized, and there is a requirement to establish mechanisms to reach people who are really in need of aid. These conditional or unconditional cash transfers will be required for a long time, thus concordant planning should be done. Continuous income support practices may be needed for poor workers and households in the future. NGOs, international institutions, and governments have a lot to do in line with this.

3.2 What the post-pandemic situation and future promises

According to the United Nations World Economic Status and Prospects (WESP) (UN, 2020b), published in mid-May, the global economy has been experiencing the sharpest contraction since the Great Depression in the 1930s due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This situation is expected to drive more than 34 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, and the global economy is foreseen to be contracted sharply by 3.2 percent this year. In this case, how will the migration be affected at the global level? How will the migrants and refugees live in the countries they have gone to? Of course, it is quite difficult to answer these questions now, but although the predictions about the post-pandemic period contain many different ideas, the most acceptable theses for the future generally are that the labor market will be reorganized, globalization will be controlled at least for a while, however, the nation-state will become more effective.

As for the answer to the question of how the more effective nation-states in the future will affect the “others” living within the borders of that state, it is thought that the economy of that state will change depending on the magnitude of the crisis experienced. We can say that a deepened economic crisis will increase anger and hatred towards the other. We can think in advance that these negativities will turn into violence against others in the streets and the neighborhoods, the migrants and refugees living in cities will be pushed to certain regions, and ghettoization will increase.

In the working life, the inequality among the employees will increase, and the migrants/refugees who can find a place in the informal sectors will be prevented from entering the labor market, and most of them will be left behind. A world in which fragile sections of society will become impoverished and this poverty gradually deepens if precautions are not taken, stands as one of the options before all of us.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



While preparing this report, interviews were held with the migrant/refugee women residing and working in Gaziantep and its districts, and interviews were held on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the daily lives and working lives of the women in different sectors. As a result of these interviews, the present and future expectations of the women are mostly to continue their jobs, that is, to regain working opportunities. The COVID-19 global outbreak has been continuing to spread globally for more than eight months, with a direct impact on people's health and deepening socioeconomic effects. Rise of the outbreak, whose effect decreased in the summer, as the second wave in autumn shows that the reduced restrictions on working life will be tightened again.

The upcoming months also show that both employees who are citizens of the country and the refugee/migrant workers will face great difficulties in supporting their families economically. The eight-month pandemic period has shown that the difficulties are getting even more severe for working refugees/migrants. Their current legal status has already increased their insecurity and amassed them in the informal labor force, and the outbreak brings forth additional challenges for them.

This situation makes it difficult for the migrants to benefit from their right to social protection, have a decent life with dignity, and be confident about their future. Considering all these issues, especially the government and other relevant institutions should develop policies to protect the rights of the migrants/refugees in the working life, and while developing such policies, they should first include those people in the process so that they can pay attention to their calls and demands. Kırkayak Kültür, a non-governmental organization that has been conducting rights-based advocacy activities in the field of migration since 2011, has developed the following policy recommendations, taking into account the study of other institutions on this issue.

In the upcoming days, with the continuation of the pandemic period in this way, it is expected that the migrant/refugee workers, especially the women, who are employed in the informal economy that is the main source of work, are expected to suffer the most from loss of income due to pandemic period measures.

The fact that workers in low-skilled jobs are mostly among the most disadvantaged persons has resulted in the employment of refugees in these areas. Having said that the occupational and personal skills of the refugees are often ignored, and their diplomas, professions, and capabilities in their countries of origin are often left ineffective in finding a job. Particularly, while the women refugees are exposed to many of the barriers that the men also face, they are imposed on gender-based discrimination in terms of

wages, employment, or access to services.

Gender inequality is another source of disadvantage for refugee workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened gender inequality, and the refugee women have become more vulnerable. For example, in Turkey, according to the ILO's national workforce data analysis (Caro, 2020), before the outbreak, the Syrian male workers were gaining 95 percent of the minimum wage whereas the female workers only 77 percent of the minimum wage. The interviews held within the scope of this study have shown that the refugee women, who mostly work in the informal labor market and during the pandemic period, have largely lost their jobs or their income has decreased. To prevent this;

An information system should be established to ensure that the refugee workers have access to the mechanisms where they can claim unpaid wages or rights in workplaces where they are dismissed or their wages are decreased. Non-governmental organizations, especially trade unions, should work actively in this regard. They should have their representation and voice as the subjects in all matters relating to the refugees.

During the outbreak, the governments expanded the social security system for their citizens and increased their support in the decisions they made. Job security, income support, access to healthcare, paid sick leave and access to the other immediate support excludes the refugees and their families working in the informal area. In particular, due to discrimination and work such as domestic works in the informal area, the women refugees cannot access the services provided within the scope of such emergency measures. For example, the scope of "short-term employment allowance" does not cover the Turkish and refugee workers who are working in informal works.

In the case of an emergency such as a pandemic, to eliminate the current negative situation of refugee workers;

- "During the pandemic period, the procedures and documentation that keep refugee workers under unsecured legal status, or the procedures for obtaining or renewing work permits may be suspended.
- It is difficult to implement social distancing measures and access to personal protective equipment during long hours in the informal workplaces where the refugees work intensively. It is fundamentally important to provide protective equipment with information on preventive health and safety measures at workplaces. In this regard, both public authorities and non-governmental organizations should work more effectively on the necessary measures. To prevent transmission of the virus in the workplace, the occupational health and safety regulations and guidelines should be drafted in a language that the refugee workers

can understand, and in a manner that they can access and communicate in their mother language wherever refugees are employed, including the informal economic units.

- With the increasing impact of the epidemic, a decrease in the formal job opportunities will lead refugees as well as citizens of the country to revert to the informal areas and it will increase the competition among the citizens of the country and the refugees/migrants. Discrimination, insecurity, access to healthcare services, decent work opportunities will get worse for the refugee workers. This situation has the potential to greatly harm social cohesion and the idea of living together. The non-governmental organizations should prioritize studies that will reinforce the sense of social harmony and coexistence.
- With the global outbreak and socioeconomic crisis that spread along with, the women refugees may get exposed to mobbing and gender-based violence more frequently within the family and at their workplaces. The women's organizations and non-governmental organizations should play an active role in the monitoring and follow-up of such violence. Especially, women's organizations should establish solidarity networks with refugee women, and such networks should be strengthened.
- With the global outbreak, it has been observed that the disadvantaged individuals and marginalized groups are more visibly discriminated against, and these vulnerable communities face the risk of being excluded from emergency measures and excluded from humanitarian interventions.
- The COVID-19 outbreak has made the women from the Dom and Abdal refugee sections from Syria even more vulnerable. In the interviews, the women from the Dom and Abdal community stated that they worked without precarity in seasonal jobs, waste and scrap collecting, and did daily works before the pandemic and the community faced the risk of extreme poverty due to the cessation of such jobs because of the pandemic.
- The government and non-governmental organizations should be careful not to assume labeling attitudes in fulfilling services and social support provided to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable and helpless groups with a sense of not leaving anyone behind.
- Finally; ensuring the participation of the women refugees in organizations representing employers and workers, taking appropriate measures to combat gender-based discrimination and xenophobia/refugee hostility in the workplace, the policies made by the public and non-governmental organizations regarding this issue, and involving women refugees in all processes will facilitate to solve the problems.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) (2014). Türkiye’deki Suriyeli kadınlar.

Caro, L. P. (2020). Syrian refugees in the Turkish labor market. Accessed from <http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection>

CCSA. (2020). How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective. Accessed from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/documents/covid19-report-ccsa.pdf>

Dedeoğlu, S. (2020). Kırılgan Kahramanlar: Covid-19 Pandemi Döneminde Tarımsal Üretimde Göçmen Kadın Emeği. Accessed from https://www.academia.edu/42867306/Kırılgan_Kahramanlar_Covid_19_Pandemi_Döneminde_Tarımsal_Üretimde_Göçmen_Kadın_Emeği

Dedeoğlu, S., and Sefa Bayraktar, S. (2018). Tarımsal üretimde Suriyeli göçmen kadın emeği: Bereketli topraklarda zehir gibi yaşamlar. Ç. Ünlütürk Ulutaş (Ed.), *Feminist Sosyal Politika: Bakım Emek Göç* (pp. 247-280). Istanbul: Notabene Publications.

Erdoğan, M., and Çorabatır, M. (2019). Suriyeli mülteci nüfusunun demografik gelişimi, Türkiye’deki eğitim, istihdam ve belediye hizmetlerine yakın gelecekte olası etkileri.

Foley, L., and Piper, N. (2020). COVID-19 and women migrant workers: Impacts and implications.

Geniş, Ş. (2011). Gaziantep’te göçmen hane profilleri ve kentle bütünleşme dinamikleri. M. N. Gültekin (Ed.), In “Ta Ezelden Taşkıdır...” Antep (1st ed., pp. 335-370). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

GIGM. (2020). Temporary Protection. Accessed on 20 November 2020 from <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

Gültekin, M. N. and Leyla Kuzu, Ş. (2011). Yoksulluğun öteki yüzü: Antep varoşlarında kadınlar. M. N. Gültekin (Ed.), In “Ta Ezelden Taşkıdır...”. Antep (p. 513–532). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Gündüz Hoşgör, A. (2011). Kadın istihdamı üzerinden marka şehir Gaziantep’i okumak. M. N. Gültekin (Ed.), Ta Ezelden Taşkıdır... Antep İçinde (p. 491–512). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Hrant Dink Foundation. (2020). Medyada nefret söylemi ve ayrımcı söylem 2019 raporu. Accessed from www.hrantdink.org

HÜNEE. (2019). 2018 Türkiye nüfus ve sağlık araştırması Suriyeli göçmen örnekleme. Ankara.

IFRC and the Turkish Red Crescent Society. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on refugee populations benefitting from the emergency social safety net (ESSN) program assessment report.

KADEM. (2018). Kadem sığınmacı kadınlar merkezi profil tarama çalışması raporu.

Körükmez, L., Karakılıç, İ. Z., and Daniş, D. (2020). Mecburiyet, müzakere, değişim: Suriyeli kadınların çalışma deneyimleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri. Accessed from <https://www.gocarastirmalarderneg.org/tr/>

Sert, D. Ş. (2016). From skill translation to devaluation: The de-qualification of migrants in Turkey. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 54, 97–111. doi:10.1017/npt.2016.9

SGDD-ASAM. (2020). Sectoral analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on refugees living in Turkey. https://sgdd.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/asam_covid_anket_raporu_200518_2_EN.pdf

SSI. (2019). Informal Employment Rate. Accessed on 20 November 2020 from http://www.sgk.gov.tr/wps/portal/sgk/tr/calisan/kayitdisi_istihdam/kayitdisi_istihdam_oranlari

Tarlan, K. V. (2020a). Toplumsal eşitsizlik, mülteciler ve pandemi. *Birikim*, (372), 36–43. Accessed from <https://birikimdergisi.com/dergiler/birikim/1/sayi-372-nisan-2020/10037/toplumsal-esitsizlik-multeciler-ve-pandemi/11721>.

Tarlan, K. V. (2020b). Pandemi, Mülteciler ve Sivil Toplum. *Birikim Güncel*. Accessed on 20 November 2020 from <https://www.birikimdergisi.com/guncel/10013/pandemi-multeciler-ve-sivil-toplum>

Tarlan, K. V. (2020c). Pandemi günlerinde göçmen/mülteci emeği: Geçmiş, bugün, gelecek. *Birikim Güncel*. Accessed on 20 November 2020 from <https://birikimdergisi.com/guncel/10125/pandemi-gunlerinde-gocmen-multeci-emeği-gecmis-bugun-gelecek>

Türkiye 113 bin yabancıya iş kapısı oldu. (2019, 14 December). *Hürriyet Gazetesi*. Accessed on 20 November 2020 from <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/amp/ekonomi/turkiye-113-bin-yabanciya-is-kapisi-oldu-41397372>

Uçar, C. (2020). Gaziantep parça başı emek piyasasının Suriyeli kadınları: Emek, zorunlu göç ve şiddet. K. Biehl and D. Daniş (Ed.), *In Toplumsal Cinsiyet Perspektifinden Türkiye’de Göç Araştırmaları* (pp. 37-55). Istanbul: Sabancı University Gender and Women’s Studies Center of Excellence, Migration

Studies Association.

UN. (2020a). Policy brief: COVID-19 and the need for action on mental health.

UN. (2020b). World economic situation and prospects as of mid-2020. Accessed from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/WESP2020_MYU_Report.pdf.

UN Women. (2018). Needs assessment of Syrian women and Girls under temporary protection status in Turkey.

UN Women. (2020). Addressing the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on women migrant workers. Accessed from <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/guidance-note-impacts-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-women-migrant-workers-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2259>

Ünlütürk Ulutaş, Ç. and Akbaş, S. (2018). Ötekilerin ötekisi: Denizli işgücü piyasasında Suriyeli kadınlar. Ç. Ünlütürk Ulutaş (Ed.), In Feminist Sosyal Politika: Bakım Emek Göç (pp. 247-280). Istanbul: Notabene Publications.

Üstübici, A., and Karadağ, S. (2020). Refugee protection in Turkey during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, Turkey Interim Report. Istanbul. Accessed from <http://admigov.eu>.

Zırh, B. C., Karakılıç, İ. Z., Çetinkaya, Ö., Ayaş, S., Özsoy, A. and Karabıyık, E. (2020). Virüs mü, yoksulluk mu? Development Workshop

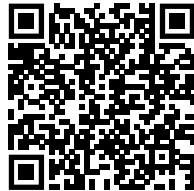


This publication is public property. There is no need to seek permission from Kırkayak Kültür in order to make citations to or reproduce part or whole of the publication. Citations may be made from it and it may be distributed commonly with the condition due reference is shown.

This report was prepared with support from European Union Sivil Dusun Program and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association . The content of this report remains fully under the responsibility of Kırkayak Kültür. The expressions contained in the report are the opinions of Kırkayak Kültür itself, and do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of European Union Sivil Dusun Program and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Association.



MUTFAK مطبخ



Please visit our YouTube channel by scanning the barcode to watch the video series "Voice of Subject: Migrant Women Labor During Pandemic".

The videos are available in Turkish, Arabic, English, and Turkish Sign Language.